

MINUTES  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MUNCIE COMMON COUNCIL  
300 NORTH HIGH STREET  
MUNCIE, INDIANA 47305



**MARCH 29, 2022**

**SPECIAL MEETING:** 7:00 P.M., 1<sup>st</sup> Floor City Hall Auditorium.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by Dan Gibson.

<b>ROLL CALL:</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
Aaron Clark	X	
Ro Selvey	X	
Troy Ingram	X	
Jeff Green	X	
Jeff Robinson	X	
Brandon Garrett	X	
Brad Polk	X	
Jerry Dishman	X	
Roger Overbey	X	

**RESOLUTIONS:**

RES. 6-22 A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MUNCIE, INDIANA TO OPT BACK IN TO OPIOIDS SETTLEMENT PURSUANT TO INDIANA CODE 4-6-15-2.

A motion is made by Selvey and seconded by Polk to Adopt.

Ben Freeman, City Attorney's office, recalls some time ago there being several discussions regarding opioid litigation that was ongoing not only Indiana but nationally, as well that the City of Muncie was a party to. At the time, the Council upon recommendation of both National Attorney Council and State Council opted back out of State Statute for the settlement and distribution of those proceeds. It is now time for them to consider opting back in, pursuant to some revisions made in the Indiana Statutes. Since the filing of this resolution (which has actually been signed by the Governor and our law), the main (inaudible) of those changes is it just gives the City more control over how those funds are spent directly by the City. Additionally, the dollar amounts obtained by the City and spent specifically for opioid prevention and treatment. Those dollar amounts would be (by his math) indicating the McKissen settlement with the Distributors the amount of \$2,349,857.59 before the payment of Attorney's fees to the State Council which are about \$204,000 so the total settlement for that would be \$2.145 million dollars payable over 18 years pursuant to the Federal Settlement Agreement. Then, the second settlement that opting back is the Johnson & Johnson settlement. The City's portion of that, after Attorney's fees, would be \$503,098.94 payable over 9 years (so that is a bit of a more accelerated payment). Total recovery is just over \$2.6 million over 9 and 18 years for the two. Therefore, this resolution has presented and it has been requested that we opt back in by our State and National Council and that is what this resolution would do (should the Council choose to approve it) and then with that he will complete the steps

necessary under statute to make sure that we get back in. It is his understanding that payments are potentially going to begin as soon as this coming month of April so things are moving fairly quickly now.

Councilman Green questions if there are guidelines for the spending of the money in treatment and preventive maintenance and wonders what all it can be spent on. Attorney Freeman can only answer that generally because he does not have the several hundred page Settlement Agreement or the courts order in front of him. In anticipation of that question, he reads, "the funds may be used for programs of opioid treatment, prevention and care that are considered best practices or pursuant to the settlement agreement or pursuant to future court order." Therefore, generally speaking, it would be any type of treatment and prevention program that would be standard, whether it is a facility or any other type of treatment programs. (It is not something he knows that much about.) It can be creative as long as it is considered a standard practice for prevention. Green confirms it can be an outpatient/inpatient expenditure. Freeman believes so. Questions called. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

### **APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:**

President Robinson explains the only other thing on the Agenda this evening is the Muncie Community School Board nominations. He communicated to interested potential nominees last week inviting them to come here this evening informing them they have three (3) minutes to introduce themselves and list why they believe they would be a good selection for the MCS Board. After their 3 minutes, he will open it up to questions from the Council. He adds there has been a few that have dropped out in the past couple of days, one as recently as an hour ago. There are five (5) here this evening to speak on their own behalf.

#### **Ryan Webb**

Mr. Webb appreciates them taking the time out to conduct this meeting this evening. Most on the Council already know him but he states his name is Ryan Webb and he has been a citizen of Delaware County in Muncie for pretty much his entire life. He likes to get involved with the community and is currently serving on the Delaware County Council. The reason he was interested in serving on the MCS Board – and explains when he first started getting involved and wanted to go towards politics that it was actually the School Board that first drew his attention. Right around the time he vamped up in wanting to take a serious run for it is when the State decided to step in and take the action that they did which was to dissolve the elected MCS Board and make it an appointed Board, for which is what they are here doing tonight. For this reason, he focused more of his attention on elsewhere and made a run for the County Council. He has still paid close attention to the School Board and the function and purpose of what they do. He claims many people have really paid a lot of attention to what is going on all across the nation, noting it has not really occurred much here close to home as far as any controversy or anything with our local School Board and it has been a pretty good School Board none the less. However, Webb indicates he is a person who believes that people should do their service and make way for new ideas and fresh faces to come in. Although he is very pleased with the people that we have on the appointed MCS Board, he feels like a fresh face and fresh ideas can go a long way. The other thing he wanted to point out, when he looked at the list of the names of some of the people that have been serving, he noticed they are very, very qualified capable people and stewards of the community, just really good folks. He really didn't notice as much that stood out to him was just the average regular person, the average mom or the average father. Webb then mentions he is a father of five with a sixth one on the way and attended Muncie Community Schools. He feels it is important to have the average person to bring some balance to the

MCS Board, and really, to bring balance to any board. The other thing that is important for balance is, he believes when the Council makes an appointment, the School Board does not really focus too much as far as political viewpoints. With the balance, it is still important nonetheless. He is more of a conservative person and his viewpoints tend to be more conservative and traditionally, a lot of School Boards haven't always leaned that way so he is hoping to bring some balance as far as some conservative values to the MCS Board. Now, that does not necessarily mean that his point of view would be the dominant view, however, it would be someone who could be a voice to offer a checks and balances for any concerns about going one way to the left or one way to the right. He thinks, as most of this Council knows, he is someone who has no problem speaking up when thinking something is important. He is very active in the community, listens to all constituents and speaks on behalf of them when they bring their concerns to him. He does not have a problem being the lone person speaking up in the room and whether it's on the winning side or losing side, he'll always speak up for what's right. He just wanted to come here today and offer his hand as far as being interested in the appointment. He is willing to take any questions that anyone may have as far as why he may or may not be qualified to serve in this appointed position.

Councilwoman Selvey refers to Webb mentioning he has fresh ideas and main issues. Her question is his main issue or the freshest idea that he would want to tackle first, if they nominate him. Webb answers as far as his perspective as a citizen, he has not really heard a lot from the School Board until something is done. He is sure people that pay really close attention are in the loop. Referring to what he did with County Council, he would try to put it more out there for everyone; meaning the average person who's not always paying attention but who will still be in the loop because the information is presented to them in their face. He knows they all do their jobs as far as making an appointment or doing the legal minimum as far as making people notified of what is going on. His goal and what he does and would continue to try to do is go beyond that and reach the people wherever they may be. What he is trying to say is essentially reach the person who is not paying attention, let them know what's going on because (as they are obviously dealing with on the Council) a lot of people don't find out about something until it's too late. They are very vocal and very active but at that point, it is too late. Therefore, what he would like to do is try to put things out there more to get the feedback from the community before the votes happen. To get people standing up here as he is standing here now and hear what is on their mind before making the votes.

Councilman Ingram thanks him for putting his name in and thinks it is important that they get a lot of people to help turn our school system around. One of the strategic plans of Muncie Community Schools is centered on five pillars. Ingram is going to read those off and requests Webb to indicate what one he believes is most important and why. The first one is high-quality pre-kindergarten education, the second one is recruitment development and retention and educated and educational leaders, the third a student-centered teaching and active learning, the forth being social and emotional learning and the fifth being family and community engagement. Webb indicates those are all very important issues so to pick one is going to be pretty tricky but although all five would be somewhat important he thinks they have to start with a strong base so (personally) the kindergarten would be the most strongest for him. When you start with a strong kindergarten and everybody is getting off on the right foot and right target it is a lot easier to reach your goals down the line.

Councilman Polk thanks him for putting his name in for this. His question is with the number of job openings currently in Muncie Community Schools (30 plus for teaching positions) how will he ensure they get qualified teachers hired and retain qualified teachers in MCS, if selected. Webb thanks him for his question and indicates there is no easy solution to that question or we would not have 30 openings. He unfortunately thinks that is a challenge that teachers are facing all across the country as it is an underappreciated workforce. The best way he could point to that is for us to locally try to support not only our teachers but also all the employees in the school system as best as possible whether it be privately and publicly. Then, that will trickle down and work its way out as far as the recruitment and the



retention. People like to work for an employer that values them (not to say that that's not happening now) but if a person feels valued, not only are they going to want to stay but people are going to want to come and work for that school system.

Councilman Green comments concerning literature books and things that the Board would be voting on for use in the school system and questions if he would tend to lean to the liberal side or conservative side and what things he would allow or not allow. Webb mentioned that is a good question and again one that is heard about on some of the national issues is some of the issues with books that come about and people find out that the content really is not appropriate for the school-aged children. Obviously, he leans conservative as he is elected as a republican. With that being said, he is not a big fan of what they call book burning or the banning of books but he also thinks appropriate materials should be available to appropriate age groups. If we were dealing with a Community Library, he would say let all the books in and the more books the better and the more different viewpoints a person can get the better they'll be as far as to how they're going to make a decision. However, that is a little different when talking about children and educational limits that you can have on certain books like that. To him, it would just be a common sense approach. That is one of the things he would like to bring is more common sense. What he was talking about earlier about the average everyday mom and dad type of person. He bases many of his decisions off common sense and if he isn't going to read it with his child sitting right next to him then he wouldn't think it should be in a school library.

Green comments concerning the teachers and relationships with students at a young age and especially at the Muncie Community Schools, there are many children that come from one-parent families and it is sometimes very difficult for the younger children to feel loved and appreciated by their parents. The family is not whole and statistics have proven that is not good and it is better have both parents. From a young age, little children crave the attention of the teacher, as they like to be hugged, told they are cared about and done a good job and knows some school systems forbid things like that. You cannot touch a child, give them a hug or tell them they have done a good job because the teachers stand in the possibility of losing their jobs. He know of one school systems within the last month that did that to one of their high school teachers when all the gentleman did was give him a pat on the back but because of that, he lost his job. With that, Green questions if Webb would defend the teachers and stand and support the teachers, wondering what he would he do in a situation like that and how he feels about those things. Webb totally understands what Green is talking about, about children and especially with the SEL in school addresses things just like that situation. He goes back to what he said earlier about bringing common sense back to the equation. He understands with today's day and age, the litigation experts are going to warn us against any possible situation that could get us into trouble but unfortunately, sometimes that overrides the common sense factor. Webb thinks in trying to dot every 'i' and cross every 't', we can really put up barriers that are unnecessary. For him, personally, agreeing that he understands why the policy is in place, he can totally relate. Furthermore, he understands what Green was referencing as far as especially some of the younger children, people with single-parent households and thinks it would have to be a case-by-case basis. A blanket policy like that is cold, out of touch and not really benefitting the child the best way. It benefits the school system as far as making sure that they are completely covered and not going to put themselves in a situation. However, the idea is to do what is best for the children and he does not know if that particular policy is best for each child. Again, he would have to do it on a case-by-case basis and a pat on the back seems okay to him. Green confirms Webb would support the teachers then in a situation like that. Webb indicates similar to that, absolutely yes. No further questions.

### **WaTasha Barnes Griffin**

Mrs. Barnes Griffin thanks for the opportunity to speak before them tonight and also thanks her family, friends and colleagues for writing letters of support, along with those that are here with her this



evening. She appreciates all their support in this endeavor. Aware that the Council has information about her but she would be happy to provide more if they do not have that. Barnes Griffin begins it is a pleasure to know most of them as she knows most of them personally while there are a few that she doesn't so she is just going to take her time to share a little bit about who she is. WaTasha Barnes Griffin stands before them as the current Muncie School Board appointee nominated by City Council in 2018 and is here tonight seeking their nomination for reappointment. As a sitting member of the Muncie Community Schools Board of Trustees, nominated by this body, she stands before them interested and qualified for reappointment to the Muncie Community Schools Board of Trustees managed by Ball State University. The mission of Muncie Community Schools is to provide a quality education environment where every child is known, safe, inspired, challenged and empowered and the Muncie Community School vision statement is "placing learners first." As a product of Muncie Community Schools, a parent of MCS students and an advocate for parents who have students in our public schools, she is an invested community member committed to the stability, education and future of our youth. She is a certified Family Development Specialist and her professional role is the Chief Executive Officer of YWCA Central Indiana. Their mission is to eliminate racism and empower women. Safety and stability for vulnerable women, children and underrepresented communities is at the forefront of that work. Barnes Griffin is a woman of color and recognizes that representation matters. She is a community leader that uses her strengths and skills to advocate and amplify the voices of the underrepresented and marginalized in our community. She serves because it's her responsibility as a community member to give back to the community and the educational system that has given so much to her. Born and raised in Muncie, Indiana on the south side of town at a location better known at 'Five Points' at 1st and Macedonia, her backdoor was the black community and her front door was the white community. What she saw then as a child was low education turnouts, lack of employment, lack of job skills, just poor people and people struggling. Today, that same neighborhood is the same way. As an advocate, she knows that education is the way out of poverty. She was born to 17 and 18 year old parents who graduated from Muncie Community Schools who made a conscious decision that as parents (along with their parents) they would ensure that this little girl right here had every opportunity to be successful. They made that decision, stuck with it and it came through Muncie Community Schools and the teachers that poured into her and made her be who she is today. She went to Sutton Elementary School and references the well-known dinosaur located on the property, which she helped build and is still out there in the field. She then went to Franklin Middle School and graduated from Muncie Central High School. Actually, she says she graduated twice because her mom was 18 walking across the stage with her in her belly so can technically say she graduated from Southside and Central. She is not just invested these days and explains she was born invested in this. Her kids are a senior and a freshman at Muncie Community Schools and her husband is a product of Muncie Community Schools as well. Every woman and child that she serves at the YWCA are a product and are attending Muncie Community Schools. They struggle and they get there and they try to do what they can to support their families because they also recognize that education is important. That is why she serves on the MCS Board. When the legislation changed in 2018 and we were coming to this point in time she was kind of confused, uncertain and upset about what was happening but also loved her school and didn't want to give up on what was happening here. She thought she could get her 'parent voice' out there and fight and argue or say you know what, she wants to be in. As a current board member, they are there but do not get paid as it is considered a "lucrative position." Our schools are in despair and they need support. It is then when people said they would serve and bring their talents and skill-sets to this school system. It is not about us, it's about our school system and who these individuals will serve. Where Barnes Griffin is today and who she is today is because of people like Ro Selvey and the teachers in our school system. She still remembers those teachers who made an impact on her life. In this day and age, teachers have it hard. They got to deal with all the behaviors and issues in the classroom along with Covid, pay freezes, hiring, it is just all those things... She wants the Council to know that she believes in

supporting teachers, as they are the nucleus, the most important thing. They educate us and help build our community. She wants to serve, give back and for generations and generations to come to know that we care about them. She wants to turn this thing around noting it's been 4 years. They came in as new board members and did not know what they were doing. She states President Mearns picked people he thought had particular skillsets that could help get our school system to a place that we can be proud of, a public system to be proud of. She comments she could have jumped ship and taken her kids out of here to anywhere else but she believes in Muncie Community Schools. This is not a sprint, it is a marathon and they are just getting in their niche and just starting to make some differences. Yes, they have balanced the budget, received a \$10 million loan, were able to regain some raises and increases to some teachers who had not had them in years and will continue to trend toward that way. They are providing social learning along with their pillars and innovation plan. She is invested in that. She has been a part of the Compensation Committee, the Facilities Committee and is a part of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. She can walk into any school and know the principal, the teachers and is sure she knows half the kids in the school and if not them then at least their mom, cousin or someone else from the 20 years of social service she has done in this community. That is what she is here for tonight and asks that the Council consider her again for reappointment. Her term will end in July and she hopes that her name is submitted to President Mearns for consideration.

Councilwoman Selvey asks if elected in this next term, what does Barnes Griffin plan on doing to be able to represent the teacher's points of view or best interest. Also, in the next term if elected, what will she bring or how will she bring their voices to the forefront line when making decisions. Barnes Griffin indicates she is an amplifier of voices so she knows that teachers have endured a lot and are still going through a lot. She knows that it's not just about money, it's about actual support of hearing what they have to say and listening and she knows in her heart, as an advocate, that is what she does. If Selvey was to call her up or if any teacher emails her, she is going to respond to those and hear what that person has to say. She does not have all the answers but will write down everything someone says and take that to the table when they are having those discussions and decisions. She knows that we cannot have a successful educational system without our teachers. Barnes Griffin has been in classrooms and just doesn't know how some of them can stay teaching when they don't get that much money and these kids are in here cutting up but they still show up, everyday, because they know how important it is and she wants to show up for the teachers. She wants the teachers to know that they are appreciated so the school system has to be really innovative in how they recruit and retain our teachers. The teacher voices would have to be the center of all the decisions that they make. Selvey, as an educator, explains every time she has had a question or concern and emailed her and she always picked up the phone. She acknowledges she does, in fact, take notes and does say she will investigate and get back to them about that and actually does and thanks her for that.

Councilman Ingram thanks her for putting herself in the position to serve knowing it is not easy to give so much of herself and acknowledges she does quite a bit. According to the Indiana State assessment results, 27% of Muncie Community School students are proficient in Math and 29% of the students are proficient in English and Language Arts. When they talked about specific grade results, 8<sup>th</sup> graders are as low as 14% in Math. He wonders what she thinks she can do on the School Board to help improve those numbers. Barnes Griffin indicates those numbers are low and not satisfactory. She is a winner and wants our kids to win. There are 5,000 kids in our school district and all 5,000 became her kids in 2018. They have to have some innovative curriculum and must really look into the curriculum and have to work with the principals, other members of the school system, their CEO and all of the administration to look at what programs and tools they can bring into the classroom to skill up the kids. Again, education is the way out of poverty and the way to success. Referring to what Mr. Webb earlier said, she thinks for kindergarten and up we have to make sure that our kids are successful and ready. They are going to be our future workforce and make up our community so we need to skill them up. Whatever it takes...



When she is at the table and they are making decisions, she is not thinking about it as a person who is on this Board, she is thinking about it as WaTasha, who came from the hood and has all these cousins, nieces, nephews and clients at the YWCA along with the people from Whitely or across town at the Boys & Girls Club and everywhere else who will one day become adults. So, we want to limit their opportunities for trouble juvenile delinquency and increase their score so they can be successful. Whatever it takes. Whomever they would have to bring in here and whatever trainers they have to bring in to skill up our teachers and enhance our curriculum because our kids have to be able to count and they have to be able to read.

Councilman Polk thanks her for putting her name back in for another four (4) years of service and questions what she feels has been the greatest achievement for Muncie Community Schools under the current School Board. Barnes Griffin indicates the greatest achievement for her is for the people who serve to say, "this is a hot mess but I'm willing to serve." That, for her, is the greatest achievement. To be able to sit at a table with Brittany Bales, a previous teacher that knows about special needs, and she brings a special component to that table. To have herself, as a community engagement person, to be able to bring the under-represented and voices of those who are in poor black and marginalized areas and come through diversity lens. That is amazing. To have Dave here who is a financial guru helping them figure out the money is amazing to her as well. To have Bishop O'Neal who can speak for the clergy and for those who are focused on ensuring holistic approach to education at that table also. Marc Irvin and Jim Williams who can advocate and make sure that legally that they are doing things right in addition to making sure that legally they are taking care of our teachers and our faculty. Then, Jim Lowe who was the architectural guru that can help with all the horrible dilapidated buildings that we have. Having a strong team of people who are also connected to the schools as there's not one of them who doesn't engage in our schools. Any one of them can go into the schools, come back to the table, bring their ideas and differences and at the end of the day make quality solutions for our students, faculty and staff. That is from the teachers to the kids to the parents to the janitor and is why they do it. She claims that is the greatest thing, having a team that can help get them to solvency and stability. Again, it has been 4 years and they are just getting started but they want to continue on that trajectory. She is proud of it now but she wants people knocking at the doors, banging on the doors, to bring their kids to our system and to want to work for our system.

Councilman Green thanks her for her service of over the last four (4) years and knows that in the things that she deals with from day-to-day in the school system she probably ran across some very difficult things. He questions what she finds has been the hardest task that the School Board has had to deal with of the last four (4) years. Barnes Griffin explains that as a Council they all know that they are the fiscal agents and the governing body so they do not run the day-to-day operations. So, having people that reach out with their concerns, they will listen to them and respond to them. The hardest task for her is wanting to take every single concern and act on it on her own and fix things for everybody on her own yet knowing that there is a board and a CEO that those things have to run through. The most difficult thing, actually, was Covid because kids were not in schools and it is known that in-person school provides a different learning experience. Kids were in homes that may not have had food or the possibility of abuse or even neglect was taking place. The teachers were teaching virtually and it was just an upset for everyone. That was a challenge to be able to navigate those waters and thank God we are almost out of that. She mentions that being a challenge for them in addition to this Council. Green then questions if she has found that the possibility of using aids in the classrooms with teachers of the students that are falling behind would have the opportunity to receive some tutoring, possibly one-on-one, to gain some traction in their education to where they can move up. Barnes Griffin comments that is one of the beauties of having a collaboration with Ball State because they are an Educational Institute and have the teachers, interns, and students who are learning who do have the ability to come to the classroom and sit side-by-side with students. That is something in which she loves the idea, to have the opportunity for



one-on-one but there are also some partnerships in our community with MOMs (Motivate Our Minds), MP3 and the Boys & Girls Club where they have that tutoring support as well. Some of them have it right in the schools so that parents do not have to experience those barriers and transportation and things like that so yes they want to skill our kids up. There is a plethora of summer programs on reading, literacy, math, enrichment, etc. and all those things free of charge. There are opportunities for our kids to be skilled up and ready and we want them ready because they are the future workforce, future Councils and Mayors and she needs our Mayor and Council members to be able to read, count and identify what the budget says. That is important to her.

Councilman Garrett thanks her for showing her support for wanting to sit on the board another term. It is a very important board and they appreciate it. He has a two-part question and asks how she feels that they get and retain good teachers. He refers to Mrs. Bales who went from elementary to Southside to Ball State and still stayed. She never even thought about leaving and neither has Barnes Griffin. He wonders how to get them and retain them. The other part refers to how sports was everything to him growing up. He is aware they are here about the School Board and teachers but to him, a great coach can teach kids structure and how to be on time. They might be the mother figure or father figure that some kids just do not have. How do we retain good coaches like Mr. Bales and Mr. Parker have been to the school systems since those both are very big for him. Barnes Griffin refers to teacher retaining and explains there are some teachers that have been caught in the gap around 12, 13 to 15 years ago when there was a hiring freeze and they had not seen raises. Our school system was bringing in folks at \$38,000 and \$42,000 and they were not willing to accept that and informed they would rather go to Yorktown or other communities to teach. She explains they do not want to lose that so it was looked at how to scale up compensation. Actually, they are actively, right now, working on compensation and we know that Yorktown will be bringing in teachers this upcoming year at almost \$50,000. It makes them wonder what they are going to do because we need quality teachers here. She knows for most of our teachers it is not about money but they have stayed through all the challenges (through the freezing) and they want to honor that. They want to look at those people who have stayed committed and ensure that they support them financially, emotionally and socially. When that Compensation Committee begins to look at those numbers she think it is them that kind of say, "hey, that's okay for them but let's look at these folks." We need to retain them and we want to recruit great teachers and not just anyone but skilled and qualified teachers. Also, teachers that look like the population and the kids they serve is important too. On the sports pace, Barnes Griffin explains it is not just about sports and athletics but it is about character building and pride. She wants our kids to be proud. As a School Board member and a parent of athletes, she wants our kids to be proud of the school that they attend. She wants stadiums and basketball arenas and to not only be able to compete in the classroom but also want to be competing in in that secular realm too. We know that builds character, development and you have to pay (kind of) what you want regarding good quality coaches. People can come in with heart but they have to look at how they are selecting who is coming in. That is something they are working on such as updating the stadium and doing some work at the fieldhouse and looking at how they recruit those coaches. All those things are happening and again we want Muncie Community Schools to be a school district that people are proud of and want to be a part of. She wants our students to be excited about sports and education. She states we are a high poverty, low-income school district but that does not mean they do not deserve anything less than the surrounding counties. When they compete, they should be able to compete at that level and should be proud to represent Muncie Community Schools. It is their job as a board to make sure that happens. If she is serving, she will make sure that everyone who deserves, needs and wants has an opportunity to do so. She uses the basketball team needing uniforms as an example. It was around \$350 for uniforms and she thought this is a high-poverty school so they can sell laundry soap or do the door to doors but where are they going to sell? To their same family members and friends without the funds. What can they do as a Board? Asking if there is funding somewhere in this budget to make sure that our kids have what they

need to come out in uniform and perform and be proud of that? Those are the kind of things this School Board has done. She says that not as a brag but just being what they are doing and that's not because its them, its inherently the culture that they're trying to set and that is that they care about our kids, teachers, faculty and our community because it effects all of us.

Councilman Clark questions the average starting salary for a MCS teacher. Barnes Griffin indicates it was about \$38,000 but they have gotten it to \$42,000 as the average salary. Clark mentions that neighboring school districts are at almost \$50,000. He questions if she sees in correlation between classroom size and student success, if there is a factor involved. Barnes Griffin definitely believes it plays a part but also thinks that student success is not solely on class size. It is about that kid in that seat and that teacher who is willing to do whatever it takes to make sure that kid is learning. She isn't picking on Ms. Selvey but refers to Southside as being one of the schools that have had a lot of challenges with the turnover rate, leadership and that flight of the teachers over there. There is already instability at home and you have to come to school and deal with that. Watching people like Ms. Selvey, going to her classroom and seeing that she might have 20 kids in there but can see them individually and is working with them one on one. She thinks it is all about relationships as relationships are crucial. You can have 25 kids in the room and can help 25 kids in the room. You have to be able to relate to those 25 kids and find what that particular thing is and do it but she will not say that a kid does not get an education because there are 25 people in the room. The kid is going to get the education from the teacher, their willingness and the support they have at home or the after-school programs and from the community. Clark refers to today's technology such as stem programs and thinking of our MCS families in their technology at home, he wonders where she sees us and wants to know how people can be innovative to get what they need to be successful. There has obviously been a lot of work from home days and then there is so much that needs to be done outside the classroom that he thinks involves that technology at home. Barnes Griffin thinks Covid made us all become a little more tech-savvy and to pivot and think beyond the traditional ways of learning and communication. So, during Covid when kids were at home, they knew that, again, it is a high-poverty school district so the ability to connect was imperative and important. Being able to offer hotspots or working with our local Wi-Fi and internet providers to ensure that was there is something they did. Not just connectivity but also the devices they would need. During Covid, they were taking a lot of hotspots or computers to homes to make sure that kids were able to connect. Then, through her lens it was how they are still not logging on so there was still some disconnect. Therefore, she decided to think about it. You want to a kid to be on a zoom call, virtual, while in a house that might have holes behind them viewable on the screen. They might have a bug crawling up or down the wall behind them. Recognizing that education can happen, they just need to be creative and innovative in that way. Indicating they are not all the way there with technology 100% but have advanced from 2020 to 2022. She thanks them and states they need the electrical support so they can make sure the connectivity can happen.

Councilman Overbey thanks her for serving and wanting to continue to serve. He wonders her thoughts on helping to direct kids into career building trade schools and things like that. Barnes Griffin acknowledges that post-secondary education is not going to be the way that all of the students will go. Traditionally, you would always push for college but now there is career tech education. There is some strong partnerships with Ivy Tech, Purdue Polytech, work very close with MACC. There is an adult program where kids can go to school half a day and come out to the MACC in the afternoon and take whatever career tech education they would like to do. There are connections with Magna and other manufacturers so they are looking at success for students in two lanes. Actually, when they come into high school, they would begin to build that portfolio. What track are they leaning towards? Are they going the career education track or are they going the post secondary education track and what classes they would need to take to be successful. That is very important and they recognize that everybody is not going to go the traditional school route but can be just as successful with the certification and go right



from high school into a career. In fact, they have had almost 200 kids in 2021 who graduated with their Associates degrees going right into either jobs or a University so it is important. No further questions.

**Matthew Peiffer**

Mr. Peiffer explains it is going to be tough to follow Mrs. Barnes Griffin and does believe she is more qualified than himself but he just wanted to put his name in the race to see if he could bring his own experience to the table. He thanks them for allowing him the opportunity to share tonight why he is interested in serving on the Muncie School Board. He is currently 24 years old and went to Muncie Central, the first year that Southside and Central were combined as a high school. He recalls moving to a foster home right down the block on Washington Street and beginning the process of being enrolled at that school. That was his first interaction with the Muncie School System. A science teacher in particular, Mrs. Byrum, who treated him like he mattered, was who he was drawn to growing up through Central during that time. She helped him know what the importance of family was as she took him under her wing and he would help her with her plants she was growing when the classes had that going on. That is the vision that Peiffer wants to see more teachers adopt. He believes that they need support and resources to be able to make the appropriate time to get to know their students and to provide them a quality education. He runs a nonprofit here in Muncie called A Voice for Kids and has won two national awards, the T-Mobile Changemakers Award and the CCAI which is the Congressional Coalition Adoption Institute Angels in Adoption award which are awards that are given out to young people and chosen by members of Congress. He is thankful to win those awards in helping families and children to connect and has helped pass over six pieces of legislation advocating for children and families. He mentions he is usually testifying about three times a year at the Indiana Senate and the House for bill's in helping children and families. He explains he runs the nonprofit advocating for others and has helped organizations raise over \$2 million for mental health services and family care. He believes that children are the future. During the past three years, he has been a substitute for the Muncie Schools System and has been getting to know students and their ideas for the future. Being young, he is able to put himself in the shoes of students and look at things from their perspective. He has seen ways to improve the System which is why he has attended the School Board meetings in trying to get a program into MCS called Handle With Care. It is a collaborative agreement between mental health providers, the local police department and schools to wrap around services to students who witness traumatic events. For example, if law enforcement responds to a home or house burned down or there's a domestic situation, the officer writes down a child's name on a piece of paper that says "Handle 'Little Johnny' With Care." It doesn't say anything the child witnessed but gets faxed over to the schools by the next morning and teachers get that piece of paper so that if the child is having some type of breakdown in class or struggling then the teachers either talk with that student or send them to a mental health provider that's on campus. The state of West Virginia and Ohio already have it going. There is some federal funding and he believes that with his contacts in the statehouse, he would be able to get some funding for that as well for MCS to get that started. Peiffer has also been a licensed teacher in Colorado for Jeffco Schools (over 158 schools) and explains they do some things a little differently there like allowing substitute teachers access any type of training that regular teachers go through. He thinks that is important for substitutes to be able to have access to those same type of experiences. They also have this incentive for substitutes to keep coming back which is if a substitute works more than 60 times within a year then the substitute pay goes up by around \$10. That is incentivizing substitutes to come back and continue teaching and is important for retention. During his time in Colorado, he met a 21 year old foster alumni who is a School Board member elected by her City with an even bigger population than Muncie. He was inspired by her and it is wonderful she was elected at just 21 years old. He believes that is (sort of) what school systems need, somebody young like students and are able to say no and to show their own perspective and ideas. Peiffer



has also been a part of the program through United Nations called A Child Rights Framework in which 195 countries and a part of the UN are part of however the two countries that do not have a child rise framework are United States and Somalia. That is the right to healthcare, quality education, to name nationality and education, childcare and parental protection from abuse. He is thankful he has been a part of that nationally with the University of Berkeley out of California and has been working on that for the past year and is hoping to present those findings to Congress so they could help push this through. That way, we can be a part of the UN. He is young, ambitious, a go-getter and believes in honesty, transparency and open communication between parents and teachers. He believes when putting himself in other people's shoes in trying to come to the middle to help create sensible solutions. He has a great relationship with Ball State and their office of Community Engagement and has been mentioned by President Mearns in his commencement address for the work he does in the community. He looks forward to putting his name in for this opportunity to serve others and thanks them for their time.

Councilwoman Selvey thanks him for his willingness to serve. The questions she is about to ask came from a fellow colleague and asks how does he build relationships with the teachers that he will be representing for this position. Peiffer answers building those relationships is individually meeting with those teachers, getting to know their perspective, and bringing his experience in to the middle. He always believe that is important so their perspective might be not a perspective of some others therefore it's important to bring them both to the table and acknowledge how this is going on but furthermore how can we also provide support for you. He thinks that is just getting down and having a meeting with the teachers, just hearing their concerns and expressing those to the rest of the School Board.

Councilman Polk refers to asking Mr. Webb the same question, with the number of job openings currently in Muncie Community Schools, how will he ensure that we get qualified teachers hired and retain qualified teachers in MCS, if selected. Peiffer thinks they need to start tapping into students at a young age and getting those teachers to build relationships with students and be that mentor so that when students are going to through MCS, they can say they want to be just like Mrs. Selvey when they grow up. Peiffer thinks it is important they are helping teachers be given the opportunity to support students more by getting aides in classrooms and thinks it is one step to help retain teachers as well as teacher pay. Like mentioning before with substituting in Colorado, you are incentivizing them to come back so that would be his hopes for retention of (at least) the substitutes. For teacher pay, look at what other schools in the area with the same amount of students, etc. are and look at those numbers and the budget and ask what can they do, what cuts can they make or how can they get more funding from the state, etc. to retain quality teachers. No further questions.

### **Roy Connor**

Before Mr. Connor begins, President Robinson informs him he did receive his resume, scanned it, and sent it to all the Council members. He went through the trouble of snail mailing him his resume so he appreciates that so that they could get in front of all the Council members. Roy Connor thanks them for the opportunity and begins explaining his background. He came to Muncie in 1963 as a junior and his dad had been in the Air Force. This ended up being a nice school he ended up going to and is internally grateful for the education and opportunity that Muncie Central gave him. He had an unbelievable coach that became a second father and claims he would not have gone to college at all except for winning the Storer Scholarship. He did that because of the education that Muncie Central gave him. He just wants to give back. Referring to WaTasha Barnes Griffin, too, he exclaims she is an excellent candidate and jokes he was almost ready to sit down and say just give it to her. He is so thankful that somebody like her is on the Board. Back to him and what he could give... He explains he could give 40 years of teaching experience. He started out at Albany High School and was in the Science department there and (thought that was ridiculous) then went to Storer and became the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Science Teacher for seven (7) years. He

mentions he has some students here in attendance tonight that were in his class. He was the Track and Cross-Country Coach there and loved that. Then, he got an opportunity to go up to Northside when it was a high school and taught there for ten (10) years, again teaching Science at all levels. At Northside, in the Biology Department, there was a class called Life Science and it was for the kids that struggled. To be quite honest, it was not a popular class for the teachers because they struggled. However, he took that on. He thought he could do a good job with them because he could relate to them, coming from a poor background. When he was in high school, his father was going to school and they had nothing. No money, which was one of the reasons he was so thankful for the Storer Scholarship. In addition, he worked with the Special Needs Teachers because they needed somebody to include their kids in the class. He said, "hey, I can do that, I'll take the training, I'll do that." Then, when they closed Northside down, he moved over to Central and became the Girls Cross Country and Track Coach there. Connor completely understands Councilman Garrett's emphasis on coaches because they have such a great impact on kids because it's an opportunity for us to be out of the classroom and dealing with relationships. He loves that. The only reason he eventually quit was his wife started having some health issues and he felt like he needed to spend more time with her and didn't want to quit teaching. He still wanted to do all the teaching that he does but he really did not have time for the coaching so quit that. Both of his daughters graduated from Central and were both honor students with an excellent education. There is so many great teachers in the Muncie Community Schools. His daughter taught there, Christy Bilby, and was there at Grissom, later went to Westview and then transferred to Albany. Unfortunately, a couple years ago she died of a heart situation but the only reason he mentions that is when he retired, he started teaching in her Science class. He would go once a week and teach the class and just loved it. It made him realize that the greatest teachers are the elementary teachers. They have such an unbelievable relationship with their kids and not that high school and middle school does not but they take those raw materials and really mold that and are the ones that give the kids an opportunity to be who they can be. He just appreciates that and still continues teaching Science at Albany with one of Christy's friends. Why is he here? He is here because he feels like the teachers were disfranchised when they put the new School Board in and he does not understand that. There was a teachers union that represented the teachers but have since said no more. You cannot have that. He wonders what kind of impact that did to the teachers, when the voice for the teachers was eliminated. And for what reason? Why wouldn't you want the teachers to have an opportunity to discuss their needs and concerns? He knows they can do that as individuals but it's much more effective when they have somebody that is representing all of them, not just their viewpoint but the elementary, middle school and kindergarten teachers, etc. If Connor is nominated, that will be one of the things he is really going to push for is getting some organized way that teachers can be represented. It is not a union so be creative and call it something else. He is not a politician and would never run for the School Board that we used to have because they were politicians and he saw how ineffective they were because a lot of them treated it as it was just a stepping stone to something else. He feels like that is not the reason to be a School Board member. You be a School Board member to serve the kids, the teachers and the administration. He is willing to answer any questions.

Councilwoman Selvey states she read his resume and, as a fellow educator, appreciates it all and him being here. She truly believes he will be a voice for teachers because teachers, or past teachers, know what they go through every day and she thinks he gets it and understands it. She then asks how or what he can do to help with improving parent relationships and getting them more involved with their student's education. Connor recalls the high school used to have a Parent Night where they invited the parents to come and each year that he taught, less and less parents showed up. He thinks that was partly their fault because they did not go after the parents. As a teacher, they need to develop relationships with the parents of the kids they have. They need to call them up when they are having trouble. They should not assume that the administration is going to do that and claims that is the job of the teacher. When he had trouble with a student, he would call the parent and they would get together and discuss the problem. Too



many times, they, as teachers, have said let the administration do that. They need to get more parents involved and he thinks one way is getting the teachers involved with the parents. Have more open nights and opportunities to meet the parents and to welcome the parents in. He thinks sometimes schools don't really welcome the parents or understand that they are the keys. Without parent involvement, a kid has a very hard time succeeding in any kind of situation. He admires the single parents who went out of their way to get involved in school and lets them know they have their backs. He thinks teachers need to do more of that.

Councilman Clark recalls being a student one year in his class of Environmental Science he believes in 1995 or 1996 and his wife was on Connor's cross-country team for a couple years. In looking over his resume, he thinks he could bring a great voice for the teachers and obviously, being retired, have time to commit to a position like this. Mentioning the parents and coaches, he asks if there is anything else he thinks that is missing that we need as a school system. Connor answers he has had over 3000 students and many of their own kids are going through our schools right now. He can relate to them. He cannot hardly go out to Wal-Mart without someone coming up to him asking if he remembers him or her. He has learned to be honest and ask them politely who they are and they will start talking and reference something he remembers. He can relate to many of the parents because they had him or knew of him. Now, he jokes that some of them may not have like them but that may be a detriment. However, he just thinks he is known in the community that way, educationally. No further questions.

### **Andrew Thorp**

Mr. Thorp thanks the Council for hearing him and his point of view. He is a Senior Mortgage Lender at Ruoff Home Mortgage and lives in Halteman Village in Muncie with his wife, Nikki and their two children who attend MCS. His son, Cameron, is a junior at Central and his daughter Caitlyn is in 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Northside and he and his wife are very happy with their achievements there. He grew up in Muncie and attended City schools and actually went to school with a previous speaker, Mr. Webb, until 7<sup>th</sup> grade when his family relocated to southern Indiana. His father was a schoolteacher actually later in life getting a teaching job down there at that time so they moved. His father taught up until last year when he finally retired. Thorp explains when it came time for him to be an adult and get through college and everything and stick his routes into the ground somewhere, Muncie was the obvious choice for him. In fact, so much so that his wife, who attended a County school (Thorpe jokingly refers to it starting with a Y and ending with an N) agreed that they were going to send their children to MCS just because of the experiences he had and the lifelong relationships and friendships he made. Making that their district of choice for their kids as students was a no-brainer. Since then, he has been a fervent champion of Muncie Community Schools any chance he gets. He is proud of the progress that the Board has made and the changes that he has seen firsthand implemented during his children's time in Muncie Community Schools. He would love to be a part of continuing that and push that ever forward into making Muncie Community Schools the desired School District, not only the County but also in the State, so that we can attract the best teachers and students to keep everybody here. He does have many friends that he associates with that live in the County and they always wonder why he sends his kids to Muncie schools. Thorpe is always quick to talk about the early college program that his son is in or ELP that his daughter was in and in fact, he went through as a child as well. He is always harboring on those things in trying to make sure that people know these things are available in community schools and they are probably better because of what we have. Not only that, they get a more broad and diversified student body to learn with and from as well. We all have different backgrounds and it is great to learn from the other people that you associate with everyday. Thorpe continues and explains his background is in finance and relationship-building. He is a servant leader through his time serving on other boards and as the Vice President of Local Philanthropic Business Leadership Group. Growing up with a teacher as a father, he was able to see the



other side of things and see what's needed, what's necessary and those trials and tribulations that teachers go through such as long hours and low pay. He believes those things would all make him a good candidate for the School Board.

Councilman Ingram thanks him for volunteering for this position. He knows it is not going to be an easy task and they have a big job ahead of them. In 2021, the average annual salary for Muncie Community Schools was roughly 37% less than the US average. Ingram thinks our teachers are very underpaid and questions what ideas and experience Mr. Thorpe would bring in order to correct that. Thorpe answers that is going to be a tough task and knows money is tight in our community, from the School Board perspective so one thing is digging into the books and figuring out where they can pull more. Additionally, if there are any areas they could pull from, or maybe fundraise some areas that can supplement some at some places where we can pull her funds into, salaries for retention and getting people on board. That is about the best thing they can do is just dig in anywhere they can.

Councilman Polk thanks him for his willingness to put his name in. He explains both of his children just recently went to Muncie Central and his daughter just graduated in 2019. Both of them were involved in the early college AP classes, especially his daughter because the agreement with Ivy Tech has allowed her to excel her college level to where she graduated in two and a half years. Polk thinks it is a good program and does not think anybody would disagree with that but wonders, how we can better market that to increase our student population to where we are pulling students from those other schools. Thorpe thinks a lot of it is word of mouth and publicity of that. He knows when his son was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and here was a meeting informing them of this program, they were surprised because they had no idea. He thinks getting that out into the public eye and really putting more emphasis on that as much as possible could be a great selling point. He knows other schools do not have that, especially the piece of getting a degree. You are walking out of high school and basically being a junior in college but also having the chance to get that associate's degree. Like he said, it is a great sales point and thinks it really needs to be pushed to the forefront. It is something they could hang their hat on as being something the School Corporation can do.

Councilwoman Selvey thanks him for his willingness to serve and refers to him mentioning having two students in MCS, one in middle and one in high school. Thorpe confirms. Selvey believes this question is relevant to him and he probably has heard some stories so is going to direct that to him. She further explains students are very disrespectful to teachers and staff and feel the administration is powerless; when it comes to discipline, what level of discipline does he think should be used to rectify this unruly behavior. Thorpe knows discipline can be an issue just like it is at home. Kids are not always the best but you do what you can. He thinks you really have to rule pretty hard and strict during those hours at school. You are there to learn, get your education and be a better person. He thinks more people in the classroom and pulling aides and such from Ball State would help. He thinks disciplinary wise, teachers do feel like they are pretty hamstrung right now on what they can do. Coming up with a policy instructing allowance of certain things or having the will to do this along with making kids aware that the teachers have a little bit more power over the day-to-day stuff than it is believed.

Councilman Green acknowledges that the teacher salary in the state of Indiana is much lower that it should be. With that being said, the teachers in the Muncie Community School System, as well as all the schools probably in the state of Indiana, with low pay still take money out of their own pockets and invest in their classroom and many times will invest in their students. Some kids will come to school without things so teachers are forking out their salary to cover things for these young students. He asks what they can do, as a Board, to subsidize this so teachers are not losing their pay. Thorpe is a fervent believer of fundraising. He does not know how much they are allowed to do that as a School Board but... going to businesses. He knows his business recently gave a truckload of stuff to the Southside Pantry. Driving the point of having a community that needs things such as classroom items and having those things will help them become better workers in the future for your businesses. In trying to hedge on that

and use that as a tool to get more income coming in via fundraising, he thinks, would be the best place. Green asks if the Board could set up a department that would be able to use cash for the teachers if the teacher brought receipts that they could reimburse for what they have spent. Thorpe is not sure on the legality on that but think it is a great idea and is something that should be looked at. Again, he does not know if that is something they can do legally but it is something he would totally be on board of doing. Either electing a separate group to do that or doing it themselves, hands on. It is something that should definitely be done.

Councilman Clark refers to the current School Board spending the last few years 'riding the ship' and wonders what his thoughts are on strategic planning, whether it be big ideas or big planning for our school system. Maybe note a few things that he thinks we need to get to the next level. Thorpe thinks teacher pay, again, retention and getting better teachers and people to stay our community. We have a top-of-the-line college right here for teaching so partnering with them and keeping people wanting to stay is a big thing that he thinks they need to push for. As far as specific ideas and stuff, until he would get in there and get a handle on it, he does not know exactly but does know the things that are already there need to be pushed further to the front, like the early college program and even East Washington Academy on the services they have. The education his daughter got there was amazing so those things need to be brought to the forefront more. No further questions.

### **Nominations**

As a reminder to everyone, Council will nominate three (3) candidates this evening to provide to President Mearns at Ball State University and then he will select one (1) to serve the School Board moving forward for the next four (4) years. He then declares nominates open. A motion is made by Robinson and seconded by Clark to nominate WaTasha Barnes Griffin. A motion is made by Clark and seconded by Garrett to nominate Roy Connor. A motion is made by Selvey and seconded by Polk to nominate Andrew Thorpe. A motion is made by Dishman and seconded by Robinson to nominate Matthew Peiffer. A motion is made by Ingram and seconded by Garrett to nominate Ryan Webb. A roll call vote showed 9 votes for WaTasha Barnes Griffin (Green, Overbey, Dishman, Clark, Ingram, Garrett, Selvey, Polk and Robinson), 9 votes for Roy Connor (Green, Overbey, Dishman, Clark, Ingram, Garrett, Selvey, Polk and Robinson), 6 votes for Andrew Thorpe (Green, Overbey, Clark, Garrett, Selvey, Polk), 3 votes for Matthew Peiffer (Dishman, Ingram and Robinson) and 0 votes for Ryan Webb. MOTION(S) CARRIED. WaTasha Barnes Griffin, Roy Connor and Andrew Thorpe nominated for consideration of the Muncie School Board.

President Robinson thanks them all for their willingness to serve. He will contact the President of the University's Office tomorrow morning with their names and contact information so they can reach out to them.



### **Other Business:**

Councilwoman Selvey reminds everyone that April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Thriving families depend on strong support systems. Support can come from family, friends, neighbors and others in this community. Child Abuse Prevention starts with each one of us by providing all families with equal opportunity and access to support they need, we can help improve the safety and well-being of children and youth across Muncie and Delaware County. She urges everyone to please get to know the incredible resources we have in Meridian Health Services, Hillcroft, New Pathways at the YOC, the Family Resource Center of YMCA, YWCA and A Better Way. All these organizations in our community and others are callous for preventing child abuse in all of its forms therefore enhancing quality of life for children and families in Muncie.



**ADJOURNED:**

A motion was made by Ingram and seconded by Polk to Adjourn. A vote by acclamation showed 8 yeas and 1 nays (Robinson). ADJOURNED.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff Robinson, President of the  
Muncie Common Council  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Belinda Munson, Muncie City Clerk  
of the Muncie Common Council